

## It's Not Always Just a Matter of Luck

*Capturing that special nature photo*

Photographers, both amateur and professional, delight in getting a split second nature shot showing the fragile beauty of our surroundings. District Photographer Patrick Lynch is no different. He just finished a mission to capture the image of the shy, elusive Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow.

Lynch accompanied wildlife biologist

Sonny Bass into the Everglades National Park to search for the tiny bird. With a population of around 3000 only and a range restricted to extreme southern portions of Florida, photo opportunities can be few and far between. "Late winter and spring is the



Environmental photographer Patrick Lynch waits for the perfect shot while on assignment. Patience is a must for successful nature photography.

best time to go because water levels recede in the marl prairies, and the grass is exposed," Lynch said. This is when male sparrows establish mating territories in the grass tussocks. "If I do see a sparrow, it's almost certain it will be a male," he added.

Bass remarked that finding the bird wouldn't be just a matter of luck. "We've done sparrow counts by listening to the bird calls. I'll take Lynch into areas already identified as having an established population, then we'll wait it out," he said.

Very early on a March morning the two adventurers set out into the Everglades and stood their ground. Three hours



Cape Sable Seaside Sparrow

went by. Then they heard the songs of the male sparrow. Appearing out of nowhere, a sparrow was spotted well hidden between the blades of grass. "It seemed to be spying on us," Lynch said. The opportunity presented itself, and the bird's image was captured. "Here's a perfect example of how it pays to be patient," Lynch said.

Lynch added that no opportunity should be missed for taking a photo. While he targeted this photo shoot for the sparrow, he was also able to get a captivating picture of a meadowlark while in the field.

The District has produced three sets of postcards that showcase nature shots taken by Lynch. He tells one story about how he got a close up shot of the endangered Florida scrub jay. "I went into the same area of scrub habitat four times hoping they would get used to me, but with no luck." He went in a fifth time and was about to give up when a scrub jay suddenly flew onto a tree branch just overhead and actually startled him. Then the whole family moved in.

To order a set of postcards, just "Ask Freddy!"



## sure-fire shooting tips

### Plan and Research:

Lynch agrees that luck seldom produces desired results. Planning and research are necessary, and it helps to have a biologist or naturalist accompany you. He notes it's best to go at sunrise. "Bird photos can be easy," he said. "But you want to keep environmental diversity in mind. Go to wetlands, estuaries, pinelands and prairies to take photos that tell a story about bird habitat."

Everglades

Scrub jay



Purple gallinule

Red mangrove

### Take your time:

Trying to photograph animals such as deer and bobcats requires a huge investment of time. Lynch related, though, how easy it is to photograph a tortoise. "Just go over and lie down beside it. Of course, the tortoise will bury itself in its shell. But in a few minutes, it will pop out and you'll have your shot."

### Avoid eye contact:

Other tips for photographing wildlife are to not look the subject in the eye. "Look through the camera and slowly swing it until your subject is in view," Lynch said. Most wildlife can be approached very closely by looking at the ground and walking sideways or backwards. "Or you can put your head down and act as though you're just another feeding animal – they don't know the difference," he added.

Question selected from District letters and emails received from the public.

**Q** My family and friends "up north" think that southern Florida is nothing but urban sprawl, theme parks and bug-infested swamps. How can I show them that our corner of the world is one of the most naturally beautiful places on the planet and home to a variety of stunning plants and unique animals?

**A** Well, since this is Florida – how about sending them some pretty postcards?!? Award-winning District photographer and my buddy, Patrick Lynch, has captured native Florida birds, wildlife, plants and landscapes and we turned them into postcards. The pictures were all taken throughout our 16-county region from Orlando to the Keys to Fort Myers. They might learn something, too, because educational descriptions about habitat, location, preservation efforts and other points of interest are included on the back of each one. And best of all, the postcards are free! To order a set, call (561) 682-6883 or email [jhawkins@sfwmd.gov](mailto:jhawkins@sfwmd.gov)

Tell us what really "matters" to you about water!

Here's what I think:

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Return this card to:  
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## CREDITS

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The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts.

Our mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply.

